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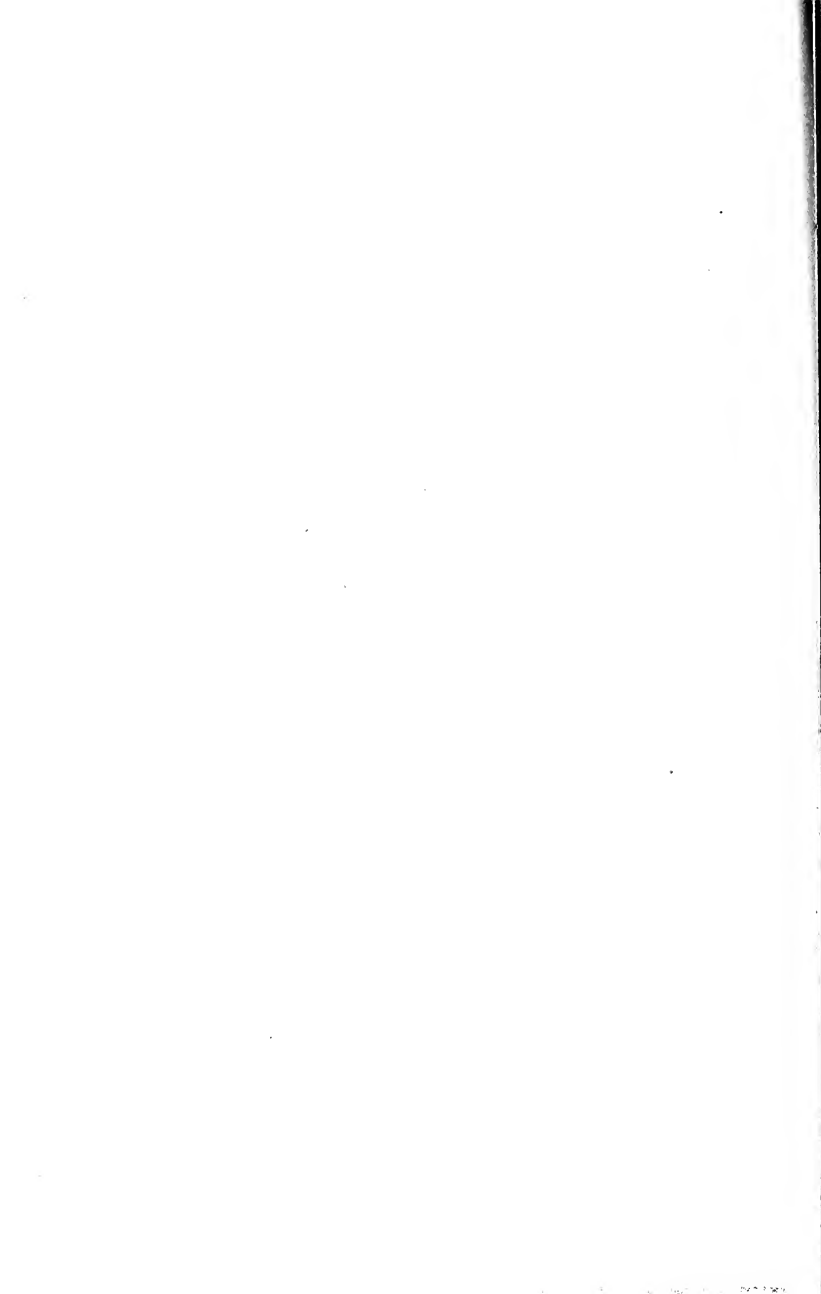
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THE CHURCH

IN

ITS RELATION TO THE STATE.

An Address

FROM

THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

TO

THEIR FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN.

“Speaking the truth in love, (that we) may grow up into him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ.”—EPHESIANS iv. 15.

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THE CHURCH

IN ITS RELATION TO THE STATE.

QUESTIONS of grave import in connection with this great subject are once more agitating the public mind. The propriety of a "Church Establishment" is called in question. What it involves, what would be the result of a separation between the Church and the State—these are inquiries which are now urging themselves upon our attention. Let us approach them in a spirit of religious seriousness, yet with calmness and trust. There may be periods to which the language may be applicable, "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." But the Christian knows that the foundation stands sure, and that whilst that which is transitory may be shaken, it is in order that that which cannot be shaken may alone remain.*

It is admitted on all hands that the Church of Christ rests upon no earthly establishment. Planted by the Son of God himself, it grew up, not only without the support, but in spite of the opposition of the State; and still lives, in ever-renewed youth, to wage its conflict with the world, after the lapse of more than thirteen centuries since the final ruin, in the west, of the mighty empire that once sought its destruction.

Before appealing to considerations more immediately affect-

* Heb. xii. 26, 27.

ing the question before us, we would offer a few observations on the argument in favour of "Church Establishments," usually drawn from the Mosaic Institutions.

I.—*Mosaic Institutions.*

The Lord had not left himself "without witness" in the heathen world, even whilst suffering the nations "to walk in their own ways";* but it was to Israel that the high privilege of a *Theocratic* Government was especially granted. The Most High revealed himself to that Nation both as its Deliverer and its King. He was at once the Object of worship and the Fountain of law. Had that age been prepared to realise the high conception proposed in the Theocracy, the Church and the State would have been co-extensive and correlative expressions of a most glorious and blessed fact. In the words, "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation" (Exodus xix. 6), we recognise the high calling of Israel.

But it was soon apparent that the nation was not "a kingdom of priests." The people disclaimed the glorious privilege of immediate access to their Heavenly King, and, by their acts of open treason and rebellion against Him, proved themselves unworthy and incapable of the privileges to which He had called them. Long was the course of training through which Israel passed preparatory to the full manifestation of the kingdom of God. The discipline of the law was needed; but it was as a "schoolmaster to bring unto Christ." †

* Acts xiv. 16, 17.

† Compare Exod. xx. 19, 20; xxxii.—xxxiv. Ezek. xx. 25, 26. 2 Cor. iii. 7—9. Gal. iii. 24.

It is not the place here to enlarge upon the sacred meaning which, according to the inspired teaching of the New Testament, was veiled under the sacrifices and service of the tabernacle and the temple. In so far as it was ceremonial and typical, it was a temporary system, furnishing no precedent for the imitation of the Church after the type has served its purpose, and has been displaced by the substance which it prefigured. And yet there are marks in this preparatory dispensation that command our attention.

First.—The Divine provision under the law was for the whole people. There was but one priesthood and one worship. No Israelite was called upon to contribute to a Church to which he was conscientiously opposed. The worship was for all. In it the whole people were represented. The Pharisee, the Sadducee, even the Essene,* the congregations of Israel, wheresoever scattered throughout the world, recognised the worship of the temple, and freely contributed the token of that recognition. The Jewish Church was consistently national, because it could produce its Divine charter of incorporation, proving its exclusive claim to the people's acceptance. The Toleration Acts of our own Parliament are now on all hands acknowledged as the too long delayed triumph of Christian principle. But in sanctioning the existence of entire communities of Christians, which disclaim allegiance to the so-called National Church, that Church has ceased to be national. The Act of Uniformity is based upon principles diametrically opposed to the Acts of Toleration. If, as is now admitted, liberty of conscience be a fundamental portion of Christian polity and ethics, no Church can now claim to be national upon principles and analogies derived from the Mosaic dispensation, because no Church can produce

* Joseph. Antiq. xviii. c. 1. § 5.

its charter of incorporation, granting an exclusive title to the sympathy and veneration of an entire people.

Secondly.—In reviewing the history of Israel, we must observe the limitations placed on the action of the State in relation to the Church. The whole land of Canaan was allotted to the tribes and people of Israel, under the authority of God himself, as a free donation from Him. Hence the Tithe is emphatically declared to be His,* and is treated as a reservation set apart for his peculiar service. It was appropriated to those members of the nation who, having Him for their inheritance, were excluded from otherwise sharing in the allotment of the land.† But let it be observed that there is in the Old Testament *a remarkable absence of any distinct provision for the compulsory enforcement of the payment of tithes by process of law.* All appears to have rested on the *conscience* of the Tithe-payer.‡ The great principle that the service of man to his Maker should be free and uncompelled, with which the State must not interfere, appears yet more strikingly on the occasions of the rearing of the tabernacle and of the temple. On each of these solemnities the offerings from the tribes were “free-will” offerings.§ The idea of a compulsory tax seems not to have entered into the mind either of David or of Solomon, far less into that of Moses. Under that dispensation, it was not imagined, even in an Oriental court, that forced payments, or legally exacted sacrifices, befitted the service of Him who looked for the worship of the heart. “The people rejoiced for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly unto the Lord, and David the king also rejoiced with great joy.” (1 Chron. xxix. 9.)

* Levit. xxvii. 30.

† Numb. xviii. 20—24.

‡ See Deut. xxvi. 12—15.

§ Exod. xxxvi. 3—6. 1 Chron. xxix. 5—9.

Thirdly.—The relation of the Jewish Church to the State was not a relation of subjection. It was the free acceptance by the nation of a Divine institution. The Church rested, not upon national, but upon Divine authority. Its worship was not ordained or interfered with by human legislation. The conduct of David was no mere exertion of royal prerogative. He was himself a prophet,* a witness to the presence of the Spirit outside of the priestly order; and both in that which he did, and in that which he abstained from doing in relation to the building and service of the Temple, he is pointedly stated to have acted in conformity with the special instructions of the Most High;† and the Temple, when finished, received its solemn consecration immediately from Heaven.‡ With one memorable exception, which consummated the long-predicted ruin of the house of Eli, the High Priests succeeded one another in regular order, without interference even from the kings.§ Such an interference was reserved for the Heathen Prince|| who vainly attempted to subvert the worship of the Temple, and was afterwards continued by the dynasty of Herod, in accordance with maxims of State-policy derived from heathen Rome. In the best ages of the Jewish Commonwealth, the Church was enthroned in the hearts and affections of the people. Reposing on its own Divine institution, it claimed no forced allegiance, but left the nation free.

Fourthly.—The organisation of the Jewish Church bore evidence of its Divine and intrinsically spiritual nature, by admitting alongside of the priesthood a free development of the prophetic order. This was, doubtless, an essential

* Acts ii. 30.

† 2 Sam. vii. 1 Chron. xvii. 4; xxii. 7, 8; xxviii. 19.

‡ 2 Chron. vii. 1, 2.

§ 1 Kings ii. 26, 27.

|| Antiochus Epiphanes; see Joseph. Antiq. xv. c. 3, § 1.

part of the Divine arrangements. The great utterance of Moses to Joshua remains a standing reproof to all who would limit the freeness of the Spirit's work. "Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!"* Like the Judges, but in a yet higher degree, the Prophets bore witness to the immediate presence of the Spirit of God in the Church. They were limited to no particular tribe, family, or sex. If Samuel, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, were of the tribe of Levi, the great prophets Elijah, Isaiah, Daniel, Hosea, and Amos, proclaim the working of the same free Spirit amongst other tribes, of whom no mention is made as regards the Priesthood. Whilst Miriam, Hannah, Deborah, and Huldah, bear an emphatic testimony to the oneness of man's spiritual nature, and that the Most High freely vouchsafes the gifts of his Spirit to the handmaid as well as to the servant.

It was through the prophets in an especial manner that a continued testimony was maintained in the Jewish Church against idolatry, worldliness, and corruption. Through them the deep things of the Law, the significance of the types, and the spiritual blessings of *His* kingdom who was to suffer in order that He might reign, were more and more revealed, and the Christian who now reads the Old Testament in the light of the New may clearly trace the true course of Divine progress in these things—a progress, not from the substance to the shadow, but a continued and ever glorious advance from the type to the antitype, from the carnal to the spiritual, from earth to heaven.

* Numb. xi. 29.

II.—*Founding of the Christian Church.*

With these views of the preparatory dispensation, shall we, as Christians, imagine that the great purpose of the Son of God, in fulfilling and ending the types of the Law, was to keep men for ever in a state of dependence upon external services and ceremonies, or to throw them back into a yet earlier and less privileged stage of development? His words to Nathanael have surely a significance beyond the occasion on which they were uttered, commanding a higher standard of expectation and desire—"Thou shalt see greater things than these."

Not only had the Christian Church in its origin no connection with the State, but such a connection is *expressly disclaimed* by its Divine founder. "My kingdom," are his emphatic words, "is not of this world."* To the same effect, He declares to his immediate followers, "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them; but it shall not be so among you."† As the King in whom the righteousness of the Law was fulfilled, He set aside the ancient polity and worship of the Jews, but not for the purpose of establishing any new national polity or national religion. Men, indeed, were to come under his yoke, but as a spiritual yoke. The religion of Jesus was not limited to the Jew or the Gentile, but was, from the very first, designed to embrace the world.

For three hundred years, in that critical period of its existence, in which, if at all, external support might seem most necessary, the Christian Church was not only without any

* John xviii. 36.

† Matt. xx. 25, 26.

national existence, but was emphatically opposed to an exclusive national spirit, a witness to a cold and hostile world, of the spiritual presence and sustaining love of Him who died not for one nation only, but for all. By His power alone Christianity, unfettered by alliances with the Governments of this world, struck its roots so deeply, and spread them so widely, as to acquire an imperishable hold upon the nations of the earth. It was then that the noble words were uttered, “Unam omnium rempublicam agnoscimus—mundum.”*

The early Christians of the first three centuries had no conception that their Divine Master designed them to be his agents in the founding of a national Church. With them Cæsar ruled in another sphere, and had no authority, as Cæsar, in the kingdom of Christ. Christianity was, from its origin, a *spiritual* dispensation—a religion of the heart, unrestricted by the boundaries or the prejudices of race or nation, and needing no support from earthly power and penalties.

Again, both in the foundation and in the development of the Church and polity of Israel, we find abundant evidence of the Divine Presence and Government. The great acts that mark the progress of the Hebrew Church are the Divinely regulated acts of spiritual men. But how little is this feature apparent in the acts and character of those who have been the principal abettors of State interference in the Christian Church. We turn to the Emperor Constantine as the first who gave a practical illustration of such an interference. But what is there to sanction the innovation upon the principles of the New Testament in the character of the successful soldier, the half-heathen, half-Christian despot, the murderer of his son,

* Tertulliani Apolog. c. 38.

and, perhaps, of his wife, who, after summoning and presiding over an assembly of bishops in the council of Nicæa, postponed, from motives either of policy or superstition, his final adoption of the Christian profession to the last moments of his life? "Great," as he may be called, if measured simply by the energy of purpose which, after a lapse of fourteen centuries, has still left its impress upon the external condition of the Church, he was a man in whom, like the empire which he ruled, the singular admixture of the "iron" with the "miry clay" has rendered him what he will probably ever remain, one of the unsolved enigmas of history.*

III.—*Introduction of "Church Establishments."*

The character of the age in which the professing Church accepted an alliance with the State does not increase our confidence.

1.—More than three centuries of despotism had accustomed the Roman world to look upon the functions of sovereign pontiff with which, since the time of Augustus, the emperors

* See Gibb. ch. 18 and 20; and the Sixth Lecture of Dean Stanley on the "Eastern Church." Niebuhr, in his lectures on the History of Rome, thus sums up the character of Constantine :—"His motives in establishing the Christian religion were something very strange indeed. The religion there was in his head must have been a rare jumble. On his coins he has 'Soli Invicto'; he worships pagan deities, consults the *haruspices*, holds heathen superstitions; and yet he shuts up the temples and builds churches. As the President of the Nicene Council, we can only look upon him with disgust: he was himself no Christian at all, and he would only be baptised in *Articulo mortis*. He had taken up the Christian faith as a superstition, which he mingled with all his other superstitions. When, therefore, Eastern writers speak of him as an *ἱσαπόστολος*, they know not what they are saying; and to call him a saint is a profanation of the word."—Niebuhr's Lect. iii. 303. Bohn's ed.

had been regularly invested, as inseparable from the imperial prerogative. These functions included, as is well known, the supreme control of the religion of the State. They had been assumed by Constantine as a matter of course; and, notwithstanding the profession of Christianity, the title was continued by at least six of his immediate successors.* Thus both princes and people had become habituated to State interference in religious things; and even Christians, yielding to the seductive influences around them, were ready to accept it, in their own favour—too little reflecting that such an interference was *essentially heathenish*, and altogether at variance with the true spirit of the Gospel. But this was not the only feature that marked the growing degeneracy of the Church.

2.—The simple piety of Apostolic Christianity had hallowed and ennobled the plain duties of domestic and ordinary life. Marriage, and all the holy relations which spring from it, had received a fresh consecration. But in the age of Constantine and Theodosius a vitiated doctrinal system presumed to discredit that which God had sanctified. The blessed relations of husband, of wife, of parent, were looked down upon with pity or contempt by multitudes who were taught to prefer the so-called “angelic” virtues of the monk or the nun. Religious excitement expended itself upon monastic seclusion and uncommanded austerities. Men vainly sought the victory over self by fleeing from the appointed conflict with the world. A false standard of holiness was set up, and, as a natural consequence, the pursuit of imaginary virtues threw into the shade the practice of ordinary duties. Veneration for the relics of martyrs quickly led the way to an estimate of their character and of the efficacy of their intercession, altogether opposed to the testimony of Holy Scripture.

* Gibb. ch. xxi. sub fin. vol. iii. p. 409, ed. 1802.

Ceremonies multiplied apace; insomuch that even Augustine, overflowing as he was with that love that "endureth all things," was constrained to write to his friend Januarius, as quoted by Bishop Jewell: "With servile burdens they so oppresse our very religion, which God of his mercy would have to be free under very few and most manifest sacraments of Divine service, that the state of the Jews is much more tolerable [than the state of the Church of Christ]."* If, according to a late eminent writer, who has collected a mass of evidence upon the subject, the prevailing infatuation in favour of celibacy and asceticism be enough to fix "the Brand of Apostasy" upon the Church of the fourth century, how, it may be asked, shall we be safe in keeping up, without question, an ecclesiastical system based to so large an extent upon corrupt maxims then current?† How, indeed, can we accept that as a model Church, of which Chrysostom indignantly complains—contrasting it with the simplicity of the apostolic age "in which the Spirit of God ordered all things"—"But now," he proceeds to say, "we have scarcely the steps and tokens of these things. The Church now may be likened to a woman that hath lost her old modesty, and that beareth only certain badges and tokens of her former felicity; and that, being utterly bereft of the

* Augustini Epistol. 119. Opera, vol. ii. fol. 576. Ed. Erasm. See Jewell's "Defence of the Apology," p. 292. Ed. 1611.

† "I appeal to serious and candid minds, competently informed in Church History, and ask whether the BRAND OF APOSTASY be not herein fixed by the Apostolic hand upon the Nicene Church."—Isaac Taylor, "Ancient Christianity," vol. i. p. 310. The capitals are those of the author. His allusion is of course to 1 Tim. iv. 1-4. Neander, in his chapter on Monasticism (Church History, vol. iii. p. 322 *seq.*), does ample justice to the *Christian leaven* which worked in the midst of asceticism, in spite of the fearful evils incident to the system.

treasures, keepeth only the cases and boxes of the precious things she had before. To such a woman the Church this day may be likened.”*

The Apostle Paul early foresaw that “some should depart from the faith”: he assures the primitive believers that “the mystery of iniquity was already working,” and warns the elders at Ephesus that from among their own selves should men arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them.† In the face of these solemn intimations we are not to be surprised at the appearance, very early, of the tares amongst the wheat; nor can we accept as Divine any testimony, how venerable soever, from succeeding ages which fails to harmonise with the plain teaching of the New Testament—the great and abiding record of immutable Christian truth. Upon the practical application of this truth to the hearts of men, and upon the acting out of its requirements in a holy life, under the operation of the Spirit of God, must ever depend the vitality of the Church. From age to age it has pleased the Lord in his mercy to raise up witnesses to its living power. And it is consolatory as well as instructive, amidst prevailing corruption, to mark this truth still triumphantly vindicating its Divine character and its exclusive claim to our allegiance, as we note the evidence continually accumulating that all decay and deadness in the Church, with their attendant evils, have been the results not of a humble, self-denying walk in accordance with its dictates, but of a *departure from it*. Tried by the standard of the New Testament, we are surely not mistaken in pointing

* Chrysost. Homil. 36 in 1 Cor. We are again indebted to Bishop Jewell for the translation. The words seem to have made a deep impression upon him, as he quotes them more than once; “Defence of the Apology,” pp. 31 and 399.

† 1 Tim. iv. 1—3. 2 Thess. ii. 7. Acts xx. 30.

to the era of ecclesiastical establishments in the age of Constantine and Theodosius as an era of grievous and increasing departure. And “if,” to use the words of Jewell, “the form of the Church were so much altered in Chrysostom’s days, what may we then think of the times of darkness that have followed.” *

IV.—*Contrast between Primitive Christianity and the Age of Church “Establishments.”*

It would be impossible, within the limits of these pages, to do more than briefly hint at a few points—

1st. According to the teaching of the New Testament the Lord Jesus Christ is the one Sacrifice for sin, the one Mediator between God and man. Through Him all believers have the same privilege of free access by one Spirit unto the Father; and all are made to partake of the one Spirit. None can offer up his brother’s heart; neither can any man or order of men worship or mediate for the rest. Hence the words applied in the New Testament to Christian ministers have no reference either to sacrifice or to priestly mediation. Except in its obvious use as regards the sacrificing priests of the Jews or the heathen, the term “priest” is there exclusively appropriated either in the highest sense to Christ himself, or in a figurative sense to his people prepared by his redeeming love to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Him. *It is never used of the Christian minister as such.* Beautiful is the idea of the Christian congregation presented to us in the New Testament, in epistles, let it be remembered, addressed by the Apostle Paul to four of the most important

* “Defence of the Apology,” p. 31.

primitive Churches—at *Corinth*, at *Ephesus*, at *Thessalonica*, and at *Rome*. The whole congregation is, according to the apostle, “the body of Christ,” “drinking into one Spirit,” and, through that Spirit, enjoying union and fellowship with Christ “the Head.” The gifts of the Spirit are, in his view, a pledge of the presence and love of the risen Lord. They were “diverse,” and no one member monopolised either the participation, or the exercise of them. The “prophetic gift,” which is defined as the ability conferred by the Spirit “to speak to men to edification and exhortation and comfort,” is commended by the apostle as a gift to be especially desired.* He expressly declares that “all might prophecy one by one,” that all might “learn, and that all might be comforted.” This hallowed liberty is, in his mind, in no wise inconsistent with the “decency and order” which he, at the same time, inculcates. Whilst every gift was to be “proved,” the Spirit was not to be quenched, nor “prophesying” despised.† Now it must be admitted that, in order fully to realise the above conception, the congregation, or, at least, the spiritual members of it, including in an especial manner the ministers, must be preserved in a *true dependence upon Christ alone*. In proportion as this is lacking, the harmony and “order” will be disturbed. Justin Martyr, in the middle of the second century, is an important witness to the recognition in the Church, up to his own day, of spiritual gifts “both in men and women.” He speaks

* 1 Cor. xiv. 1, 3.

† For the above statement see 1 Cor. xii.—xiv.; Eph. iv. 4—12; 1 Thess. v. 19—21; Rom. xii. 1—8, with the concurring testimony of the Apostle Peter, 1 Pet. iv. 10, 11. In the Church at Antioch there were both “prophets” and teachers. Ac. xiii. 1. Judas and Silas were “prophets.” Ac. xv. 32. The Apostle Paul was a guest at Cæsarea in a house where the “four daughters” all “prophesied.” Ac. xxi. 8, 9.

of the continued possession by the Church of the "prophetic gift" as a standing testimony to the fulfilment of the ancient evangelical promises, and an evidence of the abiding presence of the Spirit that inspired them.* A similar view is expressed by a still later writer, quoted by Eusebius.† Intimations of "the liberty of prophesying," appear in the works of Irenæus, and of several other writers down to the beginning of the third century; ‡ from which period the traces of its existence became more and more indistinct; and it has been generally assumed, (but with what "warrant of Holy Scripture" still remains to be proved,) that the prophetic gift, as exercised under the direct sanction of the Apostles, has been superseded by the "ordinary" exercises of study or learning.§ But has the effect upon the Church of the practical suppression or disuse of so important a gift been sufficiently considered? Noiseless as may have been the change produced, it cannot have been the less certain. From week to week the congregations assembled. Services, of which, as must be confessed, there are few, if any, distinct traces in the New Testament, but which have been ascribed, with an appearance of probability, to an imitation of the usages of the Jewish Synagogue, and which are distinctly referred to by writers of the second and third centuries,|| appear to have assumed more and more of a regular form. The preaching of the Gospel, originally powerful in its simplicity through the

* Justin Martyr, Dial. with Tryph. §§ 82, 87, and 88, where he says: "It is plain to be seen that there are amongst us *both men and women* who have received gifts from the Spirit of God."

† Eccles. Hist. lib. v. c. 17.

‡ See Irenæ. Adv. Hæres. lib. II. c. 32, § 4. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. iii. c. 27, lib. v. c. 17, 18.

§ See Mosheim de rebus Christianis ante Constant. pp. 130, 131.

|| Justin Martyr, Apol. i. c. 67; Tertull. Apolog. c. 39.

“demonstration of the Spirit,” seems to have become more and more confined to the stated utterances of the Bishop or Presbyter; which in their turn gradually became more rhetorical in their character, and more and more dependent upon the exercise of human learning or skill.* Can we be mistaken in believing that under these altered circumstances the dependence of the people upon their risen and living Lord became, imperceptibly, it may be, yet surely, exchanged for a dependence upon those who were placed over them as ministers? If no direct evidence of this can be adduced, it is, at least, a striking fact that *the age in which the “prophetic gift” is supposed to have ceased, is the age in which the Bishops and Presbyters began to assume that new relation to the congregation which ere long raised them from the humble position of “servants” or “pastors,” to that of “priests” and “mediators.”*† The change must not be ascribed to them alone. *The people also had their part in it.* In proportion as the dependence of the

* Origen (Comment. in Roman : lib. ix. c. 2, vol. 7, p. 292, ed. Lommatzsch) has some striking observations upon the contrast between the exercises of human wisdom then becoming common, heard with “great applause,” but with little fruit of conviction or faith; and the simple and unpremeditated utterances of those who spoke “according to the grace given them,” which were often made powerful to the conversion of unbelievers and the arousing of the careless. So greatly had the practise of going to *hear*, rather than to *worship*, increased in Chrysostom’s time, that we find him often sharply reproving the tumultuous clapping of hands and other tokens of applause that interrupted his preaching. See Neander’s Life of Chrys. pp. 255—257.

† The expression “Priest” is frequently used by Tertullian and subsequent writers. How far the sacerdotal ideas were carried a little later may be seen in the work called the “Apostolical Constitutions,” *passim*. See, for example, lib. ii. c. 26, where the bishop is styled “Mediator with God,” an “Earthly God after God,” &c.

congregation failed to be placed upon Christ alone, they lost, through unfaithfulness, that life in which alone they could have dominion over the world, and abdicated the functions of the heavenly priesthood to which each was called. Those functions became more and more centralised and limited to a select circle; so that in the third century the very word which had been applied by the Apostle Peter to the whole congregation, as “the heritage”* of the Lord, became exclusively appropriated to those engaged in the public work of the ministry. Just as in a later period, as the idea gained ground of the peculiar sacredness of the ascetic life, the very “clergy” themselves were divided between the “secular” and the “religious.” The phrase “entering the Priestly order” began to be appropriated to the assumption of the clerical function. The people were more and more excluded from their part in the work and government of the Church. That which even Cyprian, in the middle of the third century, speaks of as a matter of course, the presence of the people, either “assisting” or “consenting” in all important deliberations, gradually ceased; though for centuries no bishop was chosen without the popular voice, and no bishop, after he was chosen, could do anything of importance without the consent of his presbytery.

2.—In words of Divine majesty the Son of God proclaims *Spirituality* and *Truth* the essential characteristics of the worship of the New Covenant. “The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.—God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.”† “Without altars, without temples, without images;”—such were the features which the religious assemblies of the early Church presented

* 1 Pet. v. 3.

† John iv. 21, 24.

to the world around them.* Some of the noblest remains of Christian eloquence are vindications of this simplicity against the scoffs of the heathen. Origen, in a memorable passage of his treatise against Celsus, rises above himself as he contrasts the gaudy pomp of untruth in the idol temple, with the humble, sincere, and as yet unadorned worship of the Church; the lifeless and perishing images of Phidias and Polycletus, with the living and enduring realities of the new creation, wrought in believers by the Spirit of God.† As Sacerdotal ideas entered in, this ancient simplicity disappeared. The common meal in which the early believers had united in commemorating the Saviour's love became a *sacrifice*, though for ages only a *spiritual sacrifice*—the table became an *altar*—the ministers, *priests*—the simple meeting-house, or “upper room,” a stately temple. The accession of Constantine gave a fatal stimulus to these tendencies. In glaring contrast with the Saviour's words, who, in consecrating the worship of the heart, had for ever abolished the special sanctity of place—the first Christian Emperor erected, with great magnificence, a Christian “temple,” on the supposed site of the Lord's sepulchre. Under the auspices of himself and of his aged mother Helena, the imperial sanction was given to the search after relics, by the supposed discovery of the cross of wood on which it was pretended that Christ had died.‡ This quickly led to an almost incredible multiplication of similar incidents, and ultimately to a veneration for the dead, and for images, which it belongs to the Omniscient Judge alone

* Minucii Felicis, Octavius, §§ 10, 32, pp. 61, 160, ed. Davis.

† Origen contra Celsum, p. 389, ed. Spenc.

‡ See the authorities in the Second volume of Isaac Taylor's “Ancient Christianity,” p. 277, seqq.

to distinguish from actual worship. How true and suggestive is Jerome's description of the Church which he saw around him! "Greater in power and wealth, but with less of virtue since it came under the influence of Christian princes."* Here we might pass on, did not the tendencies of our own day suggest another observation. Under the influences that were every day becoming more prevalent, it need not be surprising that the primitive singing "with the Spirit"—the true "melody of the heart," sanctified for praise, should, about the middle of the third century, give place to the regular choir; and still later, to the stately chaunt of Ambrose, or of Gregory. But it is very remarkable how long the ideas of a purer age maintained the protest of the Apostolic Church against mingling the sounds of dead instruments with the worship of the living God. It is a fact to which we would invite the serious attention of our fellow-Christians around us, that for *more than twelve hundred years* this primitive testimony precluded the use of organs in public worship. Thus speaks Thomas Aquinas, writing about the year 1250, as quoted by the accurate Bingham:—"The Church does not use musical instruments, as harps and psalteries, to praise God withal, that she may not seem to Judaize." †

* Vita Malchi, Opera, vol. i. 116, ed. Plantin, 1579.

† Bingham's Antiq. 314. Compare the testimony of William Thorpe (about the year 1407), in 1 Wordsworth's Eccles. Biography, 169—172, and what the late Dr. Wordsworth there quotes as said "very beautifully" by Wycliffe on worldly singing in public worship: "And if they seyn that Angels praise God by song in Heaven; seye that we kunnen (know) not that song; but they ben in full victory of their enemies, and we ben in perilous battle, and in the valley of weeping and mourning; and our song letteth us fro better occupation, and stirreth us to many great sins, and to forget ourselves." —1 Wordsworth's Eccles. Biog. p. 171.

It is our privilege to recognise all who in every age have by their fruits proved themselves members of the universal Church—how much soever they may have been under bondage to false systems. But whilst the servants are to be honoured in their places, they are not to be set up above their Lord. And we cannot close our eyes to the fact that from the third century downwards we have to trace in the growth of sacerdotal assumption, in the increasing pomp of ceremony, in the multiplication of rites, in the exaggerated estimate of the outward and ceremonial, and of the efficacy of self-imposed services, the retrograde tendency of man's fallen nature, the divine salt of the truth mingling with the earth and losing its savour, the Church in name obtaining an ascendancy, but really leavened, and, in so far as it was leavened, enfeebled and corrupted by the spirit of the world. Slow, yet continued, was the decline of the heavenly life, and with this decline no less certain the backward movement from the antitype to the type, from the spiritual to the ritual, from Christ to man.

3.—How suggestive is the fact that the expression "*reading prayers*," to which modern usage has familiarised so many, is not to be found in Holy Scripture, with all its wealth of words to convey religious thought. Prayer—that act which, of all others, ought to be the free communion of man with his Maker, the expression at once of the feeblest cry for life, and of the deepest wants of the soul—was, in the early ages of the Church, unrestricted, even in the congregation, to any form of words. The language of Tertullian in the beginning of the third century is express, "*We pray without a prompter, because from the heart.*" *

* "*Denique sine monitore, quia de pectore oramus.*"—Tertulliani Apologet. c. 30. So Justin Martyr, fifty years earlier, describes the presiding minister of the congregation as praying "according to his

The origin of public liturgies is involved in great obscurity, but it is agreed on all hands that their introduction was very gradual; and it was long before, even in districts where usage had settled into uniformity in the use of the same liturgy, *all* public extemporary prayer was excluded. Even then a certain latitude was allowed at the discretion of the "ordinary." And so far as this country was concerned, it was not until the reigns of Edward the Sixth and Queen Elizabeth that an absolute uniformity in public prayer was adopted. "The use of York," "the use of Sarum," "the uses of Hereford and Bangor," long attested the primitive liberty which, ages after liturgies had been introduced, the bishops themselves enjoyed in their particular jurisdictions. *

4.—The Apostle Paul from his own example, and from the words of the Lord Jesus, urged upon the bishops or presbyters of the Church at Ephesus the importance of providing from their own labour for the wants of themselves and of "the weak"

ability." *Ὁση δύναμις ἀντῶ*.—Justin Martyr, *Apol.* i. c. 68, p. 270. Ed. Otto. See Lord Chancellor King's Observations, "Primitive Church," part ii. pp. 34-37. Compare *Rom.* viii. 26, 27; *1 Pet.* iv. 11. Lord King largely proves that "the primitive Christians had no stinted Liturgies, or imposed forms of prayer"—p. 33. See also 4 Bunsen's Hippolytus, 152, and 221—225.

* Augustine, in an instructive epistle (*Epist.* 118, *Opera*, vol. ii. fol. 556, Ed. Erasmi), sufficiently indicates the absence of uniformity in his day. "Every Church," says Bingham, "was at liberty to make choice for herself, in what method and form of words she would perform these things; and it was no breach of unity for different Churches to have different modes, and circumstances, and ceremonies." *Antiq.* book xvi. ch. i. § 5, par. 2, p. 864, Ed. Bohn. "The rites of the Churches throughout the British Empire *were not by any means uniform at the middle of the sixteenth century.*"—Palmer's *Origines Liturgicæ*, vol. i. p. 189.

around them.* Instances occur even in the fourth and fifth centuries of bishops being engaged in trade,† and ages passed away before it was supposed that occupations which had been consecrated by the example of the Lord and his apostles were incompatible with the duties or the character of the Christian minister. Justin Martyr in the second century, and Tertullian in the beginning of the third,‡ speak of the offerings of the faithful, and of their application to the wants of the sick and the destitute, the widows and the orphans, and the Christians in prison or in exile. But neither of these writers speak of any allowances to the ministers. It is true that about fifty years later, in the age of Cyprian, who had given up his own patrimony to the poor of the Church, we find traces of such an allowance. But even then and for centuries later *all was free*. The words of Tertullian speak the voice of the Universal Church in the West until at least the sixth or the seventh century, and in the East down to our own day: “Nemo compellitur; sed spontè confert.”—“No one is compelled to give; but each contributes freely.” §

* Acts xx. 33-35. The observations of Baumgarten on this important passage deserve our thoughtful attention:—“The Church of Christ in the midst of the world of the Gentiles will only fulfil its appointed task by remaining faithful to this fundamental law of their Apostle of giving without receiving. By this alone can it attain to a firm and independent existence from which it will be enabled to chastise, to move, to heal, and to improve the world.” Baumgarten’s *Apostolic History*, vol. ii. p. 380.

† Bing. *Antiq. Christian Church*. Book vi. c. 4, § 13, p. 227.

‡ Justin Martyr, *Apolog.* I. c. 67; Tertulliani, *Apolog.* c. 39.

§ Tertull. *Apolog.* c. 39. Comp. Irenæus *Adv. Hæres.* ii. c. 32, § 4. Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* iii. c. 26. Tatian *ad Græcos*, § 50. 1 Lingard’s *Anglo-Saxon Church*, 181-183. See the very curious letter of Apollonius (A.D. 180-190) quoted by Eusebius *Eccles. Hist.* lib. v.

V.—*Present Aspect of the Question.*

With regard to the bearing of the foregoing on the position of the United Church of England and Ireland, as by law established, we may conclude with a few observations.

We accept, with thanksgiving unto God, all that glorious result, which in his great mercy and goodness was brought about at the period known as the Reformation—the translation of the Holy Scriptures into the vulgar tongue, the presenting of them to the free perusal and reverent acceptance of the people, the awakening of multitudes to the reception of many of the most important doctrines of the Gospel, more especially of the exclusive and all-availing efficacy of the sufferings and death upon the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of his sole mediation and intercession with the Father. We bless the Lord for the light that broke forth in that day, and, in so far as the Church of England has been a witness with others to these great truths against the corruptions and errors of the Church of Rome, we rejoice and give thanks.

c. 18, in which he proposes the following as a Test whereby to distinguish the false from the true prophet—"Does it not appear to thee that *the Scripture forbids any prophet to receive gifts and money?* When, therefore, I see *a prophetess* receiving both gold and silver and precious garments, how can I fail to reject her?" And, again, towards the end—"If they deny that their prophets took presents, *let them at least acknowledge, that if they should be proved to have received them, they are no prophets.*" As regards the Eastern Church, see Paolo Sarpi, *Ecclesiastical Benefices*, c. 11, p. 38, and Dean Stanley's "*Eastern Church*," pp. 44 and 366, 367.

We desire no change in the interests of Party; but in the high and sacred interests of spiritual, primitive Christianity, we would invite our fellow countrymen to consider whether the time has not come for the termination, in a manner accordant with the requirements of Justice and Christian wisdom, of arrangements made under circumstances of great political pressure, and at the time confessed to be incomplete, by which an antiquated ecclesiastical system in connection with the State was kept on foot, for which it is impossible fairly to plead either Divine institution or Apostolic practice or allowance.

We freely recognise the blessing which has doubtless been granted in the over-ruling providence of God to multitudes under the administrations of the "Established" Church. But let it be remembered that such a blessing is no conclusive evidence of their conformity to His will. The genius of Pascal, the sanctity of Fenelon, the zeal of Xavier, give no sanction to the corruptions of Rome. Nor does the learning of Usher, the piety and talents of Taylor and Bramhall, or the holiness of Bedell and Berkeley, set the seal of Divine approbation upon the Protestant Church as it is established in Ireland.

We would respectfully invite attention to the following considerations :—

First.—It is confessed on all hands that the United Church of England and Ireland is founded on compromise. In this respect, it stands upon grounds altogether opposed to those of the National Church of the Old Testament.

Secondly.—The National Church of the Old Testament, as we have already seen, was a Church for the whole people, in which the whole nation, wherever scattered, had an interest. This is a sense in which the united Church of England and Ireland cannot claim to be national. Millions of those who

have equal rights with its professed members, as fellow subjects of the same commonwealth, conscientiously dissent from it, and their right to dissent is recognised by the same law as that under which the Church exists.

Thirdly.—A portion, in many places a very large portion, of those who are fellow subjects have been causelessly excluded from privileges and positions freely open to others who have no better claim to them; whilst the members of the national establishment are trained up under the impression that *they* have a kind of exclusive inheritance in the Christianity of the State, and are, perhaps unconsciously, taught to look down upon their Dissenting fellow subjects as in some sort aliens as regards the public privileges which the profession of Christianity secures.

Thus an established Church is placed, by the fact of its establishment, in a position the very opposite of that which is favourable to the development of Christian life, either in its own members or in their fellow Christians. On the one side, it is apt to produce arrogance, self-conceit, an absence of loving sympathy; and on the other, that irritation which petty jealousies and annoyances rarely fail to engender; whilst on each is created a spirit of mutual exclusiveness which tends to separate rather than unite those whom the same Lord and Saviour has joined together in his own love.

Fourthly.—The interference of the State has tended to *isolate* the Church as established in this country. In marked contrast with the Catholicity of the New Testament, the acts of uniformity have fostered a spirit of narrow “Anglicanism,” which would exclude from the privileges of Church fellowship our Protestant fellow subjects in Scotland, and our brethren upon the Continents of both hemispheres, who honour the memory of Luther and of Calvin, of Zwingli and of Wesley.

Fifthly.—Whilst the influence of the Church of the Old

Testament ever tended to the holiness of the nation, can it be denied that the influence of the union between the Church and the State, in this country, has been to secularise the Church, investing its bishops with worldly dignity, rank, and power; giving the force of law to a system of compulsory payments, and of Church benefices, with all the abuses connected with the rights of patronage; placing ministers over congregations, without any reference to their consent or concurrence—a system for which a long-continued usage in the most corrupt ages is all that can be pleaded; destitute of the least warrant in Holy Scripture, and altogether opposed to the spirit both of the old and of the new covenant?

Sixthly.—In the United Church of England and Ireland, the functions of the congregation are to a large extent monopolised by the clergy to the great prejudice both of themselves and of the people. The system has a direct tendency to keep the people in a state of spiritual pupillage and dependence, and to suppress the exercise of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which, according to the plain teaching of Scripture, was to be one of the special privileges of the New Covenant. But it is not the people only who are thus restrained. Under the Acts of Uniformity, no minister of the Church by law established is at liberty, whatever be his position or Christian experience, or how pressing soever the emergency, to pour out his heart freely in public congregational prayer. He must pray according to the book or not at all.

Whatever weight may attach to the foregoing observations as they affect the Church Establishment in England, they must surely apply with greatly augmented force to that portion of the Establishment which exists in Ireland. It is there, confessedly, in a small minority, not national in any sense in which the word can be appropriate to a free or a Christian

nation. If we look at results—one of the professed objects of maintaining the Protestant Church in Ireland, has been the conversion of the Roman Catholics. But, so far from this having been accomplished, it now appears that the proportion of Roman Catholics to Protestants is greater at the present time than it was a century ago. Is it, then, for the purpose of preserving a Protestant ascendancy that the Irish Church system is to be maintained? What is Protestant ascendancy? We have here at once an illustration of the danger and difficulty resulting from the union of the State with the Church. The State may lawfully exercise authority to maintain its own ascendancy and to enforce civil obedience. But what is the ascendancy of a Christian Church? Is it the ascendancy of earthly dignity and power, or is it not rather that of faith and holiness, of zeal and love? Of old the Church overcame not by carnal but by spiritual weapons, and by the same weapons must it overcome now. It is by these weapons that Protestant—that is to say, scriptural Truth, for we plead for no other,—must maintain its ascendancy. And by these we are persuaded it will be far more effectually protected, and commended to the minds and consciences of our Roman Catholic fellow subjects, than by all the weapons which the armoury of the State can furnish.

We feel the gravity of the present crisis. We would urge nothing in the spirit of contention, or from the love of change. We know well how much of wisdom is needed in every attempt to correct old institutions; and, especially in all that relates to Christianity, how necessary it is that the ground shall be cleared in the hearts of men, before either the foundation or the superstructure can be safely laid. Hence the necessity for patience, forbearance, and mutual charity, no less than for earnestness and zeal. As each is willing to be taught, all may find that they have much both to unlearn and to learn.

Yet, let us not be deterred from facing the emergency by the magnitude of the issue, or the extent or importance of the consequences involved. We would especially call upon our fellow Christians to have more faith in their risen and exalted Lord. "He loved his Church, and gave Himself for it"; and still lives to mediate and reign, that He may present it to Himself a glorious Church. Let us not doubt his continued love and power, or think any other means now necessary for the support of His truth, or for the preservation of His Church in spiritual life and vigour, than those which are warranted by the great charter of His love in the New Testament; and which, from age to age, have given so many evidences of their divine efficacy in overcoming the world.

But the great question that underlies every other in relation to the present subject, and compared with which every other must shrink into insignificance, is that which appeals to every heart and in which all are alike interested. Are the *Christian people of this land*, in right earnest, to accept the responsibilities and to take their legitimate share in the duties and privileges of the children of God? *Are all to be priests*, putting on the garment of salvation and the robe of righteousness, enjoying and exemplifying, in a holy life and conversation, the blessedness of the citizenship of heaven? The welfare of millions, for time and for eternity, is involved in the practical response to be given to this momentous question. The affirmative answer of the nation's heart and life would be the establishment of the Church indeed. How much, alas! on the other hand, is there in the United Church of England and Ireland as by law established, with its system of worldly compromise and assumption, and in its exclusively clerical government, framed after the models of an age steeped in Byzantine despotism, which not only does not favour, but is a POSITIVE OBSTRUCTION, to the full realisation

of the New Testament idea of the kingdom of God. Do any really imagine that, in removing the existing legal "Establishment," the State would cease to be Christian? Can there be a greater fallacy? It is not the State that makes the Christian; it is rather the Christian that moulds the character of the State. So far as the people themselves are brought under the power of the Gospel, Christianity will rule supreme in the national Councils, and influence the administration of the law. Were this truly the case with every professor of the Christian name in this land, how much cause would there be for hope that the Churches of England, no longer severed by State interference, but united in a true sense of their high calling in Christ Jesus, might become faithful witnesses of His power and redeeming love to the world around them, and illustrate, more than they have ever yet done, the truth and blessedness of the promise, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children. IN RIGHTEOUSNESS SHALT THOU BE ESTABLISHED." *

* Isaiah liv. 13, 14.

